

SONNETS FOR CHOICE



MRS. ALDRICH

**PS**

3501

L456

1910



Class PS 3501

Book .L4S6

Copyright N<sup>o</sup> 1910

**COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.**





## **SONNETS FOR CHOICE**



# SONNETS FOR CHOICE

BY

MARGARET CHANLER ALDRICH

11



NEW YORK  
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY  
1910

PS 3501  
.L4 S6  
1910

Copyright, 1910, by  
MARGARET CHANLER ALDRICH

---

*All Rights Reserved*



THE QUINN & BODEN CO. PRESS  
RAHWAY, N. J.

©CL A265279



TO  
MRS. JULIA WARD HOWE

---

Elder serene, within whose heart of grace  
Wide kindred build an altar to our race,  
Now, through the vaulted splendours of thy mind,  
My fledgling verse a halting way would wind.

*Rokeby, 1910*



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE POET . . . . .	3
JANUARY . . . . .	4
IN FEBRUARY . . . . .	5
MARCH . . . . .	6
SPRING . . . . .	7
MY NEIGHBOUR'S WINDMILL . . . . .	8
THE HORSE-CHESTNUT . . . . .	9
IN JULY . . . . .	10
HAYING . . . . .	11
ON A PICNIC . . . . .	12
THE MOON . . . . .	13
IN PENOBSCOT BAY . . . . .	14
HOSPITALITY . . . . .	15
A YELLOW AUTUMN . . . . .	16
IN OCTOBER . . . . .	17
IN WINTER . . . . .	18
THE MYSTICS . . . . .	19
FAITH . . . . .	20
I AM . . . . .	21
THE LAMBS . . . . .	22
FORGIVENESS . . . . .	23
AUTHORITY . . . . .	24
IN THE MAMERTINE . . . . .	25

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
ON THE PALATINE . . . . .	26
AGATHA . . . . .	27
WORLDLINESS . . . . .	28
ACHIEVEMENT . . . . .	29
PASTEUR . . . . .	30
TO MILTON, TEACHER . . . . .	31
SHELLEY . . . . .	32
THE PERFECT MAN . . . . .	33
THE SEA TO ALEXANDER AGASSIZ . . . . .	34
THE EAST . . . . .	35
NIK-KO: I . . . . .	36
NIK-KO: II . . . . .	37
NIK-KO: III . . . . .	38
VENICE . . . . .	39
LOVE . . . . .	40
LOVE'S MASQUE . . . . .	41
LOVE'S TEST . . . . .	42
AFTER DREAMING . . . . .	43
"HE ALSO WEARING FLOWERS OF SICILY" . . . . .	44
TO AN IMPROVISATORE . . . . .	45
AT A CONCERT . . . . .	46
INSPIRATION . . . . .	47
ON TOO SMALL AN ANTHOLOGY . . . . .	48
LANGUAGE . . . . .	49
ANTICIPATION . . . . .	50
ASTRONOMY A.D. 1907 . . . . .	51
SILENCE . . . . .	52

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE



## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### THE POET

TO dwell with wisdom at each hidden source  
Till hastiest speech bears a divine impress,  
To raise an image breathing loveliness  
From words long levelled to a common course :  
This is to fathom the abiding force  
Within the numbered seas of sound, to express  
For nature, not for art, the varied stress  
By which her heart hath pulsed forth intercourse.

All thought, all feeling, can be traced in sound  
By him who hearkens yielding to the spell  
And meekly echoing what he hath heard.  
But let him not within his verse be found,  
Lest the song grow confused, as when a shell  
Is moaning dumbly ocean's mighty word.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### JANUARY

ALONG the cross-roads drifted snow lies deep;  
No nearer traveller than the moon has tried  
To gain the turnpike from the windward side,  
And over buried fences she can sweep  
Unbroken shadows. In warm cedars creep  
The ruffled snowbirds, happy to abide  
'Mid clustered berries blue and orange pied;  
Out from old knotholes wary squirrels peep.

No sound, no step, until a cutter turns  
With bells and laughter plunging through the drifts;  
Two lovers, tempted by the silent space,  
Break their first track together. Patient lifts  
Their horse his feet before them pace by pace,  
And, looking back, each with the omen burns.



## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### IN FEBRUARY

AGAIN departing Winter hastens Spring;  
Her lengthened days are here with softened air,  
Her flashing twigs, and birds who brave the glare  
Of suns not veiled by leafy sheltering.  
I catch new rhythm from out the shattering  
Of icy banks, from heaving meadows bare,  
From sappy droppings to the quickened mere,  
From oozing hurried into murmuring.

Not yet her stores, her miracles unmask;  
Only by all she loosens and sets free  
Can we remember what Spring holds for earth.  
Before she bears the year 'tis hers to ask  
Much to depart, aye, and that joyously,  
Tuned to the pulses of approaching birth.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### MARCH

THIS is the month of bareness; washed and swept  
The hillsides glisten and the hollows lie  
In upturned barrenness. The sun, with high  
And eager winds, through rockbound woods has leapt,  
Searching snow caches which have quickly wept  
Away before him. Should the young shoots try  
To clothe the fields of March, they too must die.  
This is the fast when emptiness is kept.

So is it in our lives when light and air  
Parch and disperse what they have warmed and cooled.  
So is it when our hearts, left stark and bare  
For a strange season of unfruitfulness,  
Show bravely in their unsought nakedness  
The furrow which an absent hand hath ruled.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### SPRING

✓  
**W**HEN shad-tree blossoms flutter on the air  
Caught in a breeze as fragile as are they,  
When liverwort hath starred the stoniest way,  
The poetry of Spring is everywhere.  
It dances up the hillside furrow's stair,  
It beckons thrushes to the topmost spray;  
Even the turtle sees 'twixt night and day,  
And in a pond'rous metre leaves his lair.

For motion is the poetry of Spring.  
To other seasons rest and fruitfulness.  
Now every pulse beneath a dart of light  
Moves and is glad. Now through the smallest thing  
Is life transmitted with a radiant stress.  
The smile of Spring is motion infinite.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### MY NEIGHBOUR'S WINDMILL

THE river washes past the marshy brake;  
Beneath the isle of meadows streams have found  
A way to meet with rocky springs and slake  
Primæval tangles. Moisture to the ground  
Gives bubbling loams; softly smooth pastures quake;  
The waving cinctures, made by vines unbound,  
About the groves their breezy pleasures take,  
While reeds and water ply melodious sound.  
Green, all is green for centuries, then lush  
The lilies rise, fair plangent colours blow,  
And fragrance sweet. The watery acres flush  
A garden riotous, and in the glow,  
Stemming the tide, a young magician stands,—  
The winds from Shattamuck his airy wands.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### THE HORSE-CHESTNUT

THE flowering chestnut whitens into bloom,  
And to and fro a ministry of bees  
Moves heavily, embossing pageantries  
Of golden life upon a bridal loom.  
Up to no other forest tree they come;  
Honey of fruit their pirate argosies  
Amerce, and all sweet garden industries  
Equip where their rich wings are pressed for room.

What tincture brings them to the chestnut's gall?  
When orchards ripen, and the graceless burrs  
In unattended forests offer food  
To man and beast, from these a stone must fall.  
Let blending science, like a warm bee, brood,  
And say what nurture at her calling stirs.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### IN JULY

ALL day the wind has reached us from the South,  
An inshore breeze advancing like a tide,  
And like a tide covering the country-side  
With its own nature. From the river's mouth  
Come salty levels where the hot corn's drouth  
Laps at their dampness, and the meadows dried  
Before the haying softly breathe. There cried  
A wood-dove: "Rain, rain cometh from the South."

O cloud, desired by all whom thou didst pass,  
Are we thy goal? Thy wayward tent of gloom  
Hath drifted up o'er many aching farms.  
Are we to catch the fire of thine alarms?  
Thou answer'st me with thunder's shatt'ring boom  
And sheeted water beating thirsty grass.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### HAYING

LONG fragrant lines beneath the reapers sway  
And fall as though in gentle sacrifice  
To suns beneficent. The wafted spice  
Rises until high heaven is in the hay,  
Till distant townsmen on their pavement say :  
“ Now the wide mow is laden with the price  
Of all our scheming, still the fond device  
Of Nature feeds the world in the old way.”

And on the fields where cradles have descried  
The order of her progress, where the cocks,  
Like hives of sweetness, for her coming wait,  
Passes the mighty wain of Harvest's state.  
Now all hands sweep the last load to her side,  
Which up to beam and roof-tree proudly rocks.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### ON A PICNIC

READ from a page where rhymes at leisure lie;  
Let neither sound nor meaning harness verse  
To animation sped by the rhythms terse  
Of battle numbers. With slow measure ply  
Th' unwinding of our musing's treasure. By  
This still, cool river all our minds immerse  
In pastorals, to energy averse,  
Whose wistful maids and shepherds "Pleasure" cry.

Led by the piping passionate of these  
Far-off musicians, we drift into years  
Whose heat, whether from sun or temperament,  
Is long accomplished. Late above the trees  
The moon in greater magic softly steers,  
Closing our dreams, our day, with wonderment.



## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### THE MOON

**E**VEN the wind which stirs our fragrant air  
Drifts toward the sovereign coming of the moon.  
Thou dawning-of-men's-dreams art rising soon  
This summer night when love is everywhere.  
All men await thee: some on fragile stair,  
Struck between saplings, some where shallows croon.  
Over the oceans which thy light hath strewn  
The dreamers of adventure broadly fare.

Why art thou sovereign to the human heart?  
What life, what death, falls to us in thy beam?  
Why do our spirits to thy heights remove?  
It is because thou canst not wake, but art  
The world of sleep, and so, oh Moon! of love,  
Which is to man a sweet, effulgent dream.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### IN PENOBSCOT BAY

**S**AILS on the sea, and on the meadow sails.  
Bright butterflies, a mimic fleet and swift,  
Above ripe salty grasses dip and drift  
To vanish in the balsam-scented trails.  
More slowly, where the dim horizon veils  
Her flapping canvas, comes through clinging mist  
A lazy Indiaman, who all the year can lift  
Her wings to palm-fringed ports whence spice exhales.

She brings our summer hint of rest unknown  
From islands where the sun unheeded streams,  
To us who husband every blossom blown.  
She moves in gliding ease through sunset clouds;  
Upon her decks are phantoms and day-dreams;  
When she departs our youths are in her shrouds.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### HOSPITALITY

A BIRD of passage flutters through the corn;  
Unwonted is its note and flashing breast,  
A stranger to the branching groves where nest  
The ministries familiar. Wert thou borne  
From flocks migrating this September morn  
By wayward winds on mountains in the West?  
Here must thou, in a balmier air opprest,  
Fly sadly, crying softly, and forlorn?

Hither to die thou cam'st; fatality  
Of death approaching made thy warbling yearn.  
Bereft of flight and song, unto my mind  
Enhanced by thy dependence, fallen, I find  
Thee beautiful and still upon a fern,—  
A handful claiming hospitality.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### A YELLOW AUTUMN

A SUMMER'S green has fired into fine gold.  
Each lambent tree gives light unto the sky.  
Though smooth gray mists around the forest lie,  
Within, effulgence gleams on ev'ry mould.  
Beneath coined leaves all avenues are stoled;  
Down patterns many a birchen treasury  
With the crisp brilliance of the hickory,  
And here an oak has loosed his sterner hold.

Bright, shadowy, or burnished like strong ore,  
Pale with long shining, never two the same,  
The trees this gleaming curtain raise between  
Summer and winter. Their content they pour  
In a last pageant, when across the scene  
Steps hunter man, afoot for feathered game.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### IN OCTOBER

THE sunbeam of an early autumn eve  
Strikes past my eye and hovers on the shelves  
Tooled with a dimmer gold, then lower delves  
An instant in the children's curls, to leave  
The last light there. Soon we are dark. Reprieve  
Touches our hands and eyes. The restless elves,  
Dropping their games, have softly ranged themselves  
For such a story as the hour conceives.

This is th' unseeing time when all the blind  
Commune with us an instant. Eyeless things  
Meet with our sightlessness. Afar the mind  
Together leads us, quickened by a breath  
Which fears not tales of darkness or of death.  
Now clear, now soft, a rapt piano sings.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### IN WINTER

A VISION of the Spring delights mine eyes.  
Above, in nearer sequence to the sun,  
I see unfrosted lands, quick rivers run  
Rippling with light and warm with ecstasies.  
Look up! Within this garden of the skies  
Taste the soft airs and gather, one by one,  
Bright flowers blown where Winter hath not spun  
An icy mesh, where no white snowflake dies.

Thou didst not know that in the sun's wide wake  
Such gardens hung, enchanted and serene,  
Uncalendared upon this seasoned earth?  
Look up! as children watch a bubble's birth;  
For many a glittering paradise is seen  
By one on whom a fleeting light doth break.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### THE MYSTICS

THEIR love distils the mind of God. They trace  
His presence throughout earth's dissolving airs,  
Weaving what whosoever follows, shares,—  
The faithful outline of His vast embrace.  
No sound too faint for them to interlace  
The voice of light. The rune of ancient prayers,  
To such inspiring confidence, declares  
In filmy clues the wisdom of our race.

From their tried hands raised in devotion's wreath  
The fires of life descend on all beneath,  
And men enclosed within the truth revealed,  
Although they neither see nor feel the light,  
Are of some blinding torment softly healed,  
While unawares the Mystic prays for might.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### FAITH

FAITH, with discerning eyes and answering heart,  
Stands steadfast in our midst, prophet upright  
Of the Invisible. We watch her smite  
The closing clouds asunder. "Yea, thou art  
And naught shall longer intervene, as part  
To part must draw I wait thee." Slow in sight  
To those who listen gazing, cohorts bright  
Approach, and lo! earth's altar fires start.

But when great spirits pass within our ken,  
Or truths are written large which Faith first spelled,  
By them towards the Unknown beyond impelled,  
Further her arc of vision rests again.  
One God; lives sweet with love, Faith hath beheld;  
Even now she hales us peace and deathless men.



## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### I AM

SOMEWHERE within him each man born hath heard  
The voice of God saying: "Behold, I AM."  
Whether to us the great assurance came  
Or we have caught the echo of a word  
Vouchsafed another, always there is stirred  
\*Desire to be, and each repeats, "I AM."  
Then even from him floats forth his Maker's name,  
Who in self-love the Maker's image blurred.

O cry of being, mighty antiphone!  
Since Moses, clothed in meekness, from the flame  
On Horeb turned to lead his nation, thou  
Hast never ceased to thunder unison  
'Twixt God unseen and man, crying to know  
Who sends him forth: who but the great I AM?

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### THE LAMBS

THE altars of retreating worlds you blenched.  
Long years are white with multitudes of flocks  
Passing to sacrifice. Your legend locks  
Itself in every tongue of man. Intrenched  
In deepest tenderness, gold has not wrenched  
The palm of preciousness. Each yearling knocks  
A fresh advent of Spring. Naming you rocks  
A child to dreams wherein her tears are quenched.

Children, the Spring, tenderness, purity,  
The lambs wind upward past obscurity  
Of earthly emblems till celestial light  
Shepherds their pasture. In their fold has trod  
The living Christ: down from supremest height  
Comes our command, Behold the Lamb of God.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### FORGIVENESS

I SAW Christ waiting where a sin had stood,  
Made manifest in answer to the prayer  
Of one who wished all consequence to bear  
Arising from his acts which were not good.  
And this, the Truth, I dimly understood.  
None can forgive himself, we must declare  
Each other free. Forgiveness is the stair  
By which to climb from hate to brotherhood.

When men whom I have injured still resent,  
And so perpetuate my wickedness,  
Christ, to whom all relations are revealed,  
Can take their place toward me, if I repent,  
Until they learn that all forgivings bless  
The world in evil consequence repealed.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### AUTHORITY

**M**ISTRESS of all within the heart enthroned,  
To God or sin thou art obedient,  
Being thyself the meek embodiment  
Of each man's passion, honored or disowned.  
Where power claims thee patient faith is stoned  
And helplessness defrauded. Well content,  
The guilty seek Authority's consent  
By their reflection to themselves condoned.

Then let us husband generous holiness,  
Worshipping goodness, since we must appeal  
Unto our own most cherished quality.  
The best God has made clear we may reveal,  
His law emerging through our earthliness  
Until we image his Authority.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### IN THE MAMERTINE

WHILE blood and fire, entering through the eyes,  
Remain to steep and burn remotest dreams,  
The violence which with creation teems  
Accomplishes what its intent denies,  
To faith and love essential victories.  
All you will know of me when these drawn streams  
Are dry, is that I worship Christ: so gleams  
His Name through me among your memories.

'Tis thus we conquer, silent and dispersed,  
One human mind invaded by each death  
Embraced for Christ. The murderer witnesseth  
The prayers invoked for him by severing hands,  
Which, stranger than a Cæsar's crass commands,  
Persist among the voices which have cursed.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### ON THE PALATINE

A GHOSTLY ministrant, this martyr rives  
My consciousness. His words left me content,  
I cared not what his resurrection meant.  
But now its startling import slowly drives  
Through recollection, and my heart conceives  
Gladly the hope that past and present, blent,  
Are only parted by the dark descent  
Of death. So every Christian slave believes.

By bringing resurrection unto mind  
These martyrs best disclose the mean domains  
Of dissolution. What a grave contains  
Is earth's or mine: but whose this wingéd seed  
Which past destruction makes desire to speed  
Toward worlds where each is happy with his kind?

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### AGATHA

**H**ER chiselled mind holds niches of high thought  
Veiled like her eyes, as though the spirit host,  
Not man, purveys their light. An outer post  
Of heaven her selfless life; a balmy port  
For many to whom God and heaven are naught,  
Who see not Christ, in whom her sins are lost.  
Safe from impoverishment she tenders most  
To these, too starved in soul to bring her aught.

Beyond the stars her mind and soul commune;  
But her sweet heart hath fluttered in the hand  
Of every sorrow, every joyous boon.  
Careless of all but love, she doth frequent  
The gates of life: Alas! these open stand,  
She may pass through them on some mercy bent.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### WORLDLINESS

YOU move alone, lovely beyond belief,  
But lives are in your train with vast arrears.  
Now you have greeted me and gone, appears  
How spectral is your splendour, and how brief;  
For admiration with a shining sheaf  
Of conquests, gleaned from hoarse applauding years,  
Is shadowed by wronged love whose urn of tears  
Waters with with'ring salt each filchéd leaf.

Strange exiled woman, powerless to hold  
Yourself from calculation,—to its low  
And sordid pulse your blood is running slow.  
What is your beauty, where perfection's part,  
If thus consenting you through life can go  
Without the sanctuary of a heart?



## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### ACHIEVEMENT

SWEET are the hours, and of unearthly might,  
Lying betwixt two great activities.  
Here Nature stores the rare capacities  
Of rest and compensation. Here insight  
Is first vouchsafed of an impending height  
Whose outline in the subtle shadow lies  
Cast by Achievement. "Thither" the soul cries,  
And toward undreamed of sequence bends her flight.

Gladly she ceased from toil, thinking to know  
Conclusion's respite. Purpose, far beneath,  
Flashing immensities, strikes THEN on NOW.  
Quickly delivered from the little death  
Of holding aught as finished, hours like these  
Dawn on endurance in the clasp of ease.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### PASTEUR

DEATH enters through the infinitely small.  
The unseen and the disregarded hold  
Her charnel secrets in a fertile mould,  
Until the infinitely patient call  
Them forth with faith which magnifieth all.  
Patience descries how Death is waxéd bold,  
How Life herself, by Ignorance controlled,  
Worketh the widening of destruction's thrall.

Chief son of patience stands Pasteur, the good,  
So vowed to life that under hideous forms  
He knew her beauty and proclaimed its norms.  
He drew the sting from fang of maddened brute,  
Gave purple vintage to the paling fruit,  
And rest, safe rest, to fevered motherhood.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### TO MILTON, TEACHER

LEARNED in the mind of Greece, and with a soul  
Mettled to lead men far against their creeds,  
How school thy will to meet the pettish deeds  
Of youths who falter careless of the goal?  
Thou taughtest nephews orphaned, when the whole  
Of Europe was to tremble 'neath thy screeds.  
Thou hadst the eye compassionate when feeds  
The sparrow, though it mark the planets' roll.

Day after day small theorems to scan,  
False quantities in tongues thy stately art  
Could bend to living speech, nor was this all:  
What if thou wakedst, having been with Pan?  
The lyric of the morn must wait or fall  
Into the text of a school-master's part.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### SHELLEY

A MORTAL singer, thou alone hast played  
Supernal themes with so resolved a stroke,  
The wind through echoing them to praise awoke,  
And many lived who were no more afraid.  
The challenge of thy piercing fancy made  
The heart of Nature thine, but thy sweet yoke  
Of hon'ring song a brooding worship spoke  
Which Beauty safe from desecration laid.

Less man to thee than flying shapes untaught,  
And least rapt Virtue, her abounding shrine  
Where homeliest things are steeped in sacred wine,  
Ignored defiance. Now her children read  
Thee victim of a piety which thought  
God further from His works than from their creed.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### THE PERFECT MAN

**S**PRING forth, O perfect man, into the light!  
Long wooed by poets and by faith descried,  
Why in the realm of words dost thou abide,  
Why phantomlike elude life's checkered span?  
Oft has it seemed thy tide toward us ran,  
When with us briefly dwelt our loftiest pride,  
A beauteous child who, scarcely sickening, died,  
As though maturity exhaled a ban.

Thine is the earth, not ours; we, seizing part,  
Do hurt the whole. Perfection, wishing all,  
May all possess. Perchance thine hour is here;  
Wilt thou come singly, as a god draws near,  
Or is the Perfect Man a nation's heart?  
Where rides an army will thy bugles call?

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### THE SEA TO ALEXANDER AGASSIZ

UPON my breast the Faithful cast their sin,  
Yet plunge their children in my healing tide.  
I purge the past because all futures glide  
Toward the land when waves and ships come in.  
From filmy motes, which idly shine and spin,  
To caverned whales with offspring at their side,  
The lives of earth are mine; light kingdoms ride  
Palm-crested where my coral workers win.

Once in solution did I hold the earth,  
And slowly have I let the islands go,  
And slowly will I take them back once more.  
I have receded until man should know  
He, too, is of the waters in his birth  
And doth stand upright on an ocean's floor.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### THE EAST

A CHILD sat by me who would find the East,  
Upon a little map, and learn its tale.  
Before my task knowledge and surmise fail:  
Where and of what confinement is the East?  
An ounce of fragrance from her mystic yeast  
Gave many a populace a martyr's grail.  
Most potent was her essence to entail  
Renown on magus, chirurgeon or priest.

While in the scholar's universe one thought  
Embalmed by Eastern tongues, though it pay toll  
In twenty Western minds, is never less;  
While fragments speak her an intrinsic whole;  
While every man who prays the East has taught,  
Conquest and chart her bourne cannot confess.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### NIK-KO: I

WHAT noble trees, what vast and stately groves  
Are these which with solemnity prevail  
Until it dwells at Nik-ko? It behooves  
The pilgrim, moving shrouded in your veil  
Of deep and reverence-compelling shade,  
O gentle cryptomerias, to own  
The balmy charity which your dim aid  
A cloak upon his weariness has thrown.  
Toil-marked and travel-stained, slowly to pace  
Between your rows whose ancientness  
Makes nothing of one life—in such a place  
All is renewed to calm and quietness.  
Nik-ko! Your groves no traveller leaves behind,  
They shade the distance of each grateful mind.



## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### NIK-KO: II

HERE not an acre, but a mountain-side  
To Holiness and Peace are dedicate:  
The waterfalls, the river's rushing tide,  
A valley and its hills all consecrate.  
Would you see Nik-ko? 'Tis a holy land,  
Meet for long sojourn. Like the saints of old,  
Who thought strong walls of paradise did stand  
In every sunset cloud, so we are told  
That Nik-ko is not common earth, but lies  
In its rare beauty for the Buddhists' good.  
From far they come and feast their faithful eyes  
With its nobility. When one hath stood  
Upon Chuzenze's mountain, he hath been  
Nearer to heaven than the dead have seen.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### NIK-KO: III

UPON the hillside long majestic stairs  
Lead us to courts where princes have been laid  
To rest. Here bells and gongs with sombre airs  
Announce the holy doors. Strange feet are stayed  
Upon the threshold, but your eyes may see  
The molten glory of the inner space,  
The soaring dragons on a golden sea,  
The carven lotus blooming with the grace  
Of living fragrance. To successive fanes  
The guardian leading, here and there the tone  
Of priest, for pilgrim praying, sounds the strains  
Of earthly weakness; but o'er all is thrown  
So great a beauty supernatural  
The stars in heav'n could worship and not fall.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### VENICE

NOW thundering an advent on my walls,  
Now pleading as a prisoner for release,  
Now sibilant of travel and surcease,  
The tide of my dominion sweeps and falls.  
Vacant the silent splendour of my halls;  
Shrouded in dreams of conquest and increase  
The dead Venetians lie, sealed unto peace  
From which no rival resurrection calls.

But these my populations wide and free,  
These night-long voices sounding my desires,  
These leaping mirrors to the sun's bright fires,  
Unwearied in their passing to and fro,  
Bearing the unseen winds they come and go:  
The ceaseless, countless footsteps of the sea.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### LOVE

AROUND our world is drawn the cord of love;  
From whence or wherefore none do understand,  
Nor can men weave the palpitating strand,  
Since none have found an end or break thereof.  
Sometimes in arching starry loops above,  
Sometimes coiled close, a life-destroying band,  
Most dear when shut within a small child's hand,  
Love takes or leaves us as it finds a groove.

Love hath both depth and height; we have seen those  
Who writhe forever in consuming throes,  
And we have seen the Blessed stand in flame  
Which, entering them, shot forth a beauteous light,  
Making the world of shadows gleaming white.  
These last it is who give all love one name.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### LOVE'S MASQUE

DANCING it overwhelmed my youth and out  
Again, with melody and rhythm, then fled,  
I dancing on, content. The years have sped,  
Off'ring to all men the same blinding rout.  
An hundred quick'ning measures twine about  
The hearts which shadow mine. Over the dead  
Sweet songs of mindfulness are nightly said,  
And to high chorals the young, marching, shout.

Who are the mystic train? Whose feet, what song,  
Through time unchallenged every sense may move  
To hallow service? What the measure breathed  
Which like a smile upon our lives is wreathed?  
"Behold," they said, "we are all those whom Love  
Hath need of: he hath marked your cadence long."

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### LOVE'S TEST

MY song is briefer than a summer's day,  
Clipped at both ends by your not hearing it.  
Each stave, disjointed as a blind man's way,  
Halts before sense and stumbles over wit.  
I fondly echo strains which you have heard,  
So doth your soul inform monotony.  
Within your name I find a cryptic word  
Which to my life is strangest alchemy.  
Oft have I loved, but never have I been  
As now, a moon to one high, moving star  
Whose satellite by her is never seen,  
While in her light he travels long and far.  
  
Yet, more than worship, give I mortal love,  
Since to myself this star I would remove.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### AFTER DREAMING

THOU hast been with me once again in dreams,  
Those fastnesses unscaled by Time or Death,  
Those treasures where night depositeth  
The coin which our day-time loss redeems.  
Such brief presentment of existence seems  
Half torture when the loved one vanisheth,  
But wholly joy when back he wandereth,  
With voice and smile where recognition gleams.

Thou hast been with me once again; from whence  
Our hearts, our minds approached, we cannot tell.  
Perchance to every dream a different road,  
Else should we make of one a sweet abode.  
I wake, and we have been together: hence  
Flies spectred Separation to his hell.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### “ HE ALSO WEARING FLOWERS OF SICILY ”

WHAT crowns thee best in hours of fond acclaim?  
I see soft-scented chaplets at thy feet  
Fall till each step is wreathed. Some vineyard sweet  
Hath stripped the vintage of its shade. Whence came  
These petals, if no garden is aflame  
With thy report? What mellow herbs discreet  
Have crushed their leaves of healing, to repeat  
Upon the air thy life-potential name?

Aloof thy spirit from the praise confused,  
Unclaimed thy ghost by all this day can bring;  
But on thy heart a book, and pressed between  
The words, which were our friends when men abused,  
Rest violets we gathered wandering  
Long before nations had discerned thy mien.



## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### TO AN IMPROVISATORE

LET me hear music when thy soft voice breathes  
A poem on the breathless summer's night.  
Our minds below th' horizon with the light  
Perchance toil yet; but here the spirit sheathes  
Itself in rest, and round the spirit wreathes  
Music, such dreams as make stern thought take fright.  
Call golden numbers down; beneath their flight  
The plodding heart with youthful rapture seethes.

The Kings have spices poured from many a jar  
Which, in their falling, oft reminded me  
Of noble, learned poems, filling far  
Both ear and air with riches. But one rose  
Makes countless slaves by perfume each man knows.  
A rose, Enchantress, let thy poem be.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### AT A CONCERT

PLAY to us, for the heart of music stirs  
Similitude which, like possession, bears  
The fruit of earthly joy. In her wake fares  
Man's spirit, singing what his soul avers:  
That she is his, and he supremely hers.  
Play to us lofty, superhuman shares  
Of concrete sound, and clustering pliant airs  
From space where filmy life with life concurs.

Make us enduring harmonies receive,  
Lead us to arches of the universe,  
Spans undisturbed which traverse human brains  
As light cleaves water, leaving it alive.  
Mind, heart and sense in melody immerse,  
Until through them high heavenly order reigns.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### INSPIRATION

I KNOW not what my eager hand should write;  
To an unspoken will I feel it curve,  
A servant greater than my thoughts deserve.  
Through me unbidden crowd the lines to-night.  
Are there, then, unlaid dead who stoop to trite  
And godless jargon? Or must I preserve  
Some fragmentary memories which swerve  
Aside from Truth, mere shadows of her might?

Not knowing what I am, how can I tell  
To which veiled power a strange sentinel,  
Words by my tongue and fingers come to be.  
Only by what is written can I guess  
When I have echoed wandering emptiness,  
And when the passing of life's mastery.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### ON TOO SMALL AN ANTHOLOGY

**H**OW can we name the poems we love best?  
How bind within one little volume's lore  
Those gleaming treasures which do move us more  
Than garnered lives to heav'n's reward addressed?  
Wide lights which show us ages stretched at rest,  
Strong music which the poets ever pour  
Into the hours of silence,—can we store  
Their perfect singing between east and west?

How ill they fare together, clipped and seamed  
Into a tiny sheaf, which should have teemed  
With one great name and all he said to earth.  
Three verses out of Omar: this is mirth,  
And 'tis his laughter answers, "Let him be  
Whose measure is a trite anthology."

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### LANGUAGE

WE cannot tell what word will catch the light  
And hold it as warm amber holds the sea.  
From hand to hand we pass the sleeping sprite  
Not knowing which a brooding nurse could be;  
Through sound and number we pursue the flight  
Of thought and image, till our senses drown  
In medleys beauteous of songs and sight.  
But all we seize is to confusion grown,  
Timid and chill. We wake with alien night.  
Yet words there are seeking their master hand,  
Live things with gaits responsive to his might,  
Moving with him a clear, spontaneous band.  
To these men listen, wishing they were words  
To whom a poet could bring blest accords.

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### ANTICIPATION

**I**F I could share the vision of the stars  
And gaze down endless shafts of vivid light,  
I would not look on earth's insensate wars,  
While the surrounding heavens in peace are bright.  
Searching for life among the spinning moons,  
Or for its source in their controlling suns,  
Man's isolation and the petty boons  
His heart demands ring idle as his guns.  
The splendid darkness of the Universe,  
Those worlds which met extinction in their course  
To hang obedient without futile curse,  
Leave human systems ignorant of force.

Sublimity around us shines and dies;  
When shall we compass her profundities?

## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### ASTRONOMY A.D. 1907

YET owing nothing to the human will  
Do you remain: no trembling star hath known  
Obedience to mortal mind. Alone  
Amid created hosts you, Sovereigns still,  
Arise and perish without man. While ill,  
And good life, death, flame, cloud, wind, wave, and stone  
The earth-born mind hath harnessed, soft have shone  
Unnumbered worlds remote from fault or skill.

If swiftly now caught up by light we run,  
If through the portals of inflaméd Mars  
Gaze on the measure of each tireless stride  
Across immensity, what spirit need deride  
The dream of man's dominion over stars,  
His coming to the dayspring of his sun?



## SONNETS FOR CHOICE

### SILENCE

SOME thoughts are clear to us, although estranged  
From the familiar channels of our speech.  
No haunting phrases their deep meaning teach,  
The vaster orbit of their light is ranged  
Beyond the nether air we have deranged  
With clam'rous voices. When their swift rays reach  
Our world of sound and shadows, they impeach  
Its unrealities and leave them changed.

Too far such thoughts, too cold for you and me?  
Nay, through a child's true mind, the deepest well  
God gives our thirst, we watch their progress free.  
And oftentimes a poet's minstrelsy  
Within a limpid mirror can compel,  
Untold, the Image of Infinity.





MAY 28 1910

One copy del. to Cat. Div.

MAY 28 1210

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
  
0 015 799 314 8